

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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TAGS: ASEC

SUBJ: VISIT OF GOVERNOR WALLACE

REF: STATE 54499

SUMMARY: GOVERNOR WALLACE'S VISIT GUATEMALA MAR 17-19
IN RESPONSE TO INVITATION FROM PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AND
LOCAL "PARTNERS OF THE AMERICAS" GROUP WAS PUBLIC RELATIONS
SUCCESS REFLECTING FAVORABLY ON GOVERNOR, PARTNERS GROUP,
AND UNITED STATES: END SUMMARY.

2. WALLACE ARRIVED GUATEMALA MAR 17 AND PARTICIPATED
FOLLOWING DAY IN INAUGURATION OF LOCAL ROOSEVELT HOSPITAL'S
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION CENTER BUILT WITH FUNDS DONATED
BY ALABAMA'S "PARTNERS OF THE AMERICAS" TO HELP GUATEMALA
RECOVER FROM DEVASTATING FEB 4, 1976, EARTHQUAKE.
CEREMONY, WHICH FEATURED JOINT PARTICIPATION OF WALLACE
AND LAUGERUD, DREW ENTHUSIASTIC OVERFLOW AUDIENCE AND
RECEIVED WIDE MEDIA PLAY, INCLUDING ON-THE-SPOT RADIO
TRANSMISSION. IN SPEECH, LAUGERUD SAID 27,000
GUATEMALANS HAD DIED IN EARTHQUAKE, AND SOME 120,000
HAD BEEN INJURED. EXPRESSED HIS GRATITUDE TO WALLACE
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AND ALABAMAN "PARTNERS OF THE AMERICAS", 100 OF WHOM
ATTENDED CEREMONY, FOR PROVIDING NEW REHABILITATION
CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF SUCH A TRAGEDY. PRESIDENT ALSO
THANKED U.S. GOVERNMENT FOR ITS PROMPT AND EFFECTIVE
AID. BOTH AMBASSADOR BOSTER AND GUATEMALAN
AMBASSADOR TO U.S. ATTENDED CEREMONY, AS DID DAVID
VANN, MAYOR OF BIRMINGHAM, SISTER CITY OF GUATEMALA CITY.

3. EDITOR OF BIRMINGHAM NEWS, JOHN BLOOMER, WHO IS PRESIDENT OF PARTNERS GROUP IN ALABAMA, TOLD GATHERING THAT REHABILITATION CENTER HAD BECOME REALITY NOT ONLY THROUGH DONATIONS OF ALABAMANS BUT ALSO BECAUSE OF COOPERATION OF DELTA LINES AND CHEVRON. ADDED THAT 13 ALABAMA CITIES ARE NOW AFFILIATED WITH SISTER CITIES IN GUATEMALA.

4. AFTER DEDICATION CEREMONY WALLACE AND FAMILY WERE HONORED GUESTS AT LUNCHEON GIVEN BY PRESIDENT LAUGERUD. AMBASSADOR ACCOMPANIED GOVERNOR DURING LUNCHEON.

5. AMBASSADOR LIKEWISE ACCOMPANIED GOVERNOR EARLIER SAME DAY DURING COURTESY CALL ON ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER ALFREDO OBIOLS AND AT CITY HALL CEREMONY MAR 17 DURING MAYOR'S PRESENTATION OF KEYS OF CITY TO WALLACE.

6. GOVERNOR'S PRINCIPAL PUBLIC REMARKS WERE CONVEYED THROUGH AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE ON ARRIVAL WHEN HE SAID ALABAMA'S HELP TO GUATEMALA WAS GIVEN IN THE KNOWLEDGE THAT, IF ALABAMA HAD SUFFERED A SIMILAR CALAMITY, GUATEMALA WOULD HAVE BEEN EQUALLY CONCERNED AND WOULD HAVE PROVIDED AID TO ALABAMA. WALLACE EMPHASIZED HE HAD COME TO GUATEMALA FOR HUMANITARIAN, NOT POLITICAL, REASONS AND THEREFORE DECLINED TO COMMENT ON GUATEMALAN REJECTION OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE. ON OTHER HAND GOVERNOR EMPHASIZED CONTINUING NEED FOR CLOSE US/LATIN AMERICAN TIES AND PRAISED PROGRAMS SUCH AS CITY-TO-CITY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AFFILIATIONS.

7. COMMENT: GOVERNOR WALLACE DEFTLY TURNED ASIDE ALL EFFORTS TO INVOLVE HIM IN FOREIGN POLICY MATTERS DURING HIS VISIT, SPECIFICALLY THE QUESTION OF GUATEMALA'S RENUNCIATION OF U.S. MILITARY ASSISTANCE IN VIEW OF THE REQUIREMENT THAT THE STATE DEPARTEMENT SUBMIT REPORTS TO CONGRESS ON HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVANCE IN COUNTRIES RECEIVING MILITARY ASSISTANCE, AND THE BELIZE QUESTION. DURING HIS CALL ON THE ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER -- AT WHICH TWO FORMER GUATEMALAN FOREIGN MINISTERS, JORGE SKINNER-KLEE AND ROBERTO HERRERA, WERE PRESENT -- SKINNER-KLEE SPENT SEVERAL MINUTES EXPLAINING GUATEMALA'S PREOCCUPATION ABOUT BELIZE TO THE GOVERNOR. THE GOVERNOR LISTENED POLITELY AND INDICATED HIS AWARENESS OF THIS PROBLEM BUT MADE NO SUBSTANTIVE COMMENT ON IT. HE EMPHASIZED TO SKINNER-KLEE, AS HE HAD IN A PREVIOUS STATEMENT TO THE PRESS, THAT HE HAD ALWAYS FELT THAT THE U.S. SHOULD PAY MORE ATTENTION TO ITS LATIN AMERICAN NEIGHBORS AND

SAID THAT HE HAD ONCE FELT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE TO
PROMOTE A MARSHALL PLAN FOR LATIN AMERICA.

8. ALTHOUGH GUATEMALA'S RENUNCIATION OF U.S. MILITARY
AID HAD OCCURRED ON THE EVE OF THE GOVERNOR'S VISIT,
PRESIDENT LAUGERUD DID NOT MENTION THIS SUBJECT EITHER TO THE
GOVERNOR OR TO THE AMBASSADOR DURING CONVERSATIONS WITH
THEM AT THE PRESIDENT'S LUNCH FOR GOVERNOR WALLACE ON
MAR 18.

9. GUATEMALANS WHO MET WALLACE WERE FAVORABLY IMPRESSED
BY HIS FRIENDLY, OPEN MANNER. ALABAMANS WHO CAME HERE
WERE EQUALLY IMPRESSED BY FRIENDLINESS OF GUATEMALANS.
IN SUM: A SINGAL SUCCESS FOR PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE DIPLOMACY.
BOSTER

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